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DEPT FOR INL/PC (KATHLEEN PALA AND CHRISTINE CLINE), WHA/CEN (ROIS BEAL)

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SUBJECT: BELIZE RESPONSE TO UPDATE FOR DUBLIN GROUP MEETING

REF: State 03132

Response is keyed to reftel para two.

ONE: While Belize is not a major drug source, transit or consuming country, it is part of the trans-shipment corridor to the United States. The Government of Belize (GOB) supported narcotics operations and investigations in 2007 and collaborated with the United States, including on extradition of fugitives wanted in the United States. Belize is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

The Belize National Coast Guard (BNCG) continued patrolling the Belizean coastline and cayes. The Belize National Forensic Science Services (NFSS) laboratory capacity building and training program continues.

TWO: In 2007, the BNCG conducted several counternarcotics operations with USG assistance.

THREE: A mini-Dublin conference was held in Belize on September 20, 2007. Canada, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. appeared to be the main contributors to counternarcotics programs in Belize with the U.S. representing the majority of training and other funded programs.

FOUR: The major narcotics threat in Belize is cocaine trans-shipment through its territorial waters for onward shipment to the U.S. The primary means for smuggling drugs are "go-fast" boats transiting Belize's lengthy coastline and reef system, then transshipment along navigable inland waterways to remote border crossings. Interdiction is hampered by the lack of adequate host nation resources, lax customs enforcement, and an apparent lack of political will to aggressively confront the issue.

Given frequent changes in trafficking routes and lack of resources for maritime and air assets, the potential remains for trans-shipment of cocaine through Belize to increase. Local marijuana cultivation necessitates continual monitoring and periodic eradication. Though the GOB publicly advocates combating drug trafficking and associated crime, it provides limited resources to the effort. Where possible, USG assistance will continue to focus on supporting the police counternarcotics unit, Belize National Coast Guard, investigative, forensic and prosecutor units, and the Financial Intelligence Unit. Belize would benefit from an adequately resourced prosecutor's office, a more active Financial Intelligence Unit, a more autonomous police counternarcotics unit, and passage of effective wiretap legislation.

FIVE: U.S. Policy Initiatives and Bilateral Cooperation. The U.S. strategy in Belize continues to focus on assisting the GOB in developing a sustainable infrastructure to combat drug trafficking. The USG provides support to: the Belizean Forensic Laboratory to increase the justice system's successful investigations and prosecution of crimes; a small drug reduction program for at-risk school youth and support to prison drug rehabilitation; and maritime

security and law enforcement. The USG also assists with Coast Guard training.

A number of training courses were provided in 2007 to improve Belizean anti crime capacity. The USG provided maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, engineering, and professional development training to the BNCG. The USG continues to provide technical assistance for developing and implementing an appropriate legislative framework to provide the BNCG with clear authorities. Additionally, the USG provided training to the Police Department in interdiction, narcotics officer survival, parcel investigations, anti-terrorism, anti-gang, asset seizure and other related topics.

DIETER